TASK FORCE THUNDERBOLT CHRONICLES

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Today is the 15th of October, another historic milestone in the creation of a new democratic Iraq. Once again, the Iraqi's risked life and limb to exercise their right to vote. This time, it was to accept or reject the draft constitution. Regardless of whether it is approved or not, the process is the victory. The fact that the people get to decide something as important as the rule of law is in itself a monumental achievement. Clearly, they understand this and are willing participants. But, it could not have happened without our Soldiers who created the conditions for them to vote. So, I'd like to start this issue of the brigade newsletter with a sincere thanks to all, Soldiers and their families, who made this historic day a reality. Those of us deployed with TF Thunderbolt and C/1-12 FA miss you and cherish your willingness to support us as we serve abroad. As I said at the deployment ceremony, we serve our country and defend her freedoms for you, our loved ones. We couldn't do it without you and we are making a real difference here.

From the Transfer of Authority on 21 September until today, I can tell you that the members of TF Thunderbolt have made an immediate, positive impact on how the XVIII Airborne Corps lives and fights. As you know, our mission is to take care of those who are out in the streets training the Iraqi security forces and the Corps and Division headquarters that control them. The unit before us did some good work. But, I have to tell you we do it better-and it's not by accident. We have an incredible, dedicated team that is interested in doing things right and doing them well. I hear it daily. Soldiers and tenant unit commanders come up to me and routinely say, "We're glad you're here," or "Things have really gotten better since you took over." It's great to be a Thunderbolt!

In addition to the folks normally assigned to the brigade, we have individual augmentees from around the Army making things happen. Troopers from the 1st Cavalry Division and

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Hello Thunderbolt family; I hope this note finds you in good health and spirit. I am proud of our Soldiers for adjusting so well to our new mission. They are adapting daily to the situation and feeling good about their jobs. You play a very important role in this process; without your support and care for the family at home we could not focus as much attention to our mission.

As the holiday season approaches, please place safety first. If you plan to go Candy Collecting at the end of the month, remember the basics of bright clothing and an adult checking out all candies prior to eating. The house and car require preparation for the winter months, as well. Please make those checks to ensure you are not without a car or water supply on a cold day. Our

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY

BY CPT MATT DENNIS

The days have been racing by for those of us in Iraq. I certainly hope the time is passing quickly for those of you back home as well. Since the last update I wrote, some things have changed and some have stayed the same. The basic quality of life has not changed much from last update. Currently two of the major trailer neighborhoods on Victory are being wired for cable. This will be a free service and will be the basic AFN package that is available in Europe. We have some new members to the Thunderbolt Team now. LTC Brubaker joined us from Ft. Carson, and MAJs Sulit and Streletz joined us from Ft. Hood. We also gained CPT Travis Immosette from the FACCC. Recently we promoted SFC Goins and SFC Alexander to the rank of MSG, SSG Milton to SFC, and SGT Morales to SSG. PV2 Meyers and PV2 Reyes have advanced to PFC, and PFC McCallister has advanced to SPC. Congratulations to all these Soldiers and their families. We also welcomed two new babies to the family. The Luifau and White families were both blessed with happy, healthy babies since the last update. My last announcement to make is the re-enlistment of SGT Gould. He is the first of the Thunderbolt Team to take advantage of the enormous advantage to re-enlisting during deployment. Many soldiers who would not normally be eligible for a bonus qualify for one while deployed. The icing on the cake is that whatever bonus is received is tax free. This is just another way the Army tries to compensate its Soldiers for the sacrifices they make every day. Nothing will replace the missed birthdays, holidays, and family time, but the financial benefits do help somewhat.

At the time of my last update we were still learning our jobs in many cases. I am pleased to say now, that we are on track and building steam. The difference we are making for Soldiers here is tangible. Many unit commanders have commented that there is a noticeable difference since we arrived. This proves once again that Artillerymen can accomplish any mission (in this case with the help of a few Engineers, an Infantryman, and a couple Logisticians, but who's counting). The bottom line is that your Soldiers are doing incredible things, here to support the troops that go outside the wire everyday and put their lives on the line. Our aim is to make their lives inside the wire as comfortable as possible, and so far we are right on target.

Upcoming are several VTC opportunities. These are excellent sessions where you can see and talk to you Soldier at the same time on sort of a "giant web-cam". All who have participated have said it was a great experience.

This wraps up my update for now. Until next time, keep up the outstanding support from the states. Continue to write letters, send packages, and keep us in your prayers

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Rear-D stands ready to help you in any way; please give them a call at the first sign of trouble.

Thanksgiving and Christmas are right around the corner; we will do all we can to provide that home away from home feeling. I ask you to do the same and keep a turkey bone cold and a gift in the corner for our return. The stores provide many of our needed items and the mail takes anywhere from seven to fourteen days to reach us. The arrival of your boxes to us always sends a smile across more than the addressees' face. Please ensure you know the mailing deadlines if you plan to ship boxes/cards over for the holidays to ensure the arrival by your desired times.

Thank you for standing by your Soldier, without your support we would have to fight two wars instead of one. Thank you for all you do for the Thunderbolt family; we are one team, family, and Army.

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COSCOM at Fort Hood have taken the bull by the horns in the engineering section (DPW) to fix this place up. Our director of logistics hails from Fort Carson and is partnered with leaders from 19th Maintenance Battalion. Together, they are making supplies and services available to the base. Of course, Camp Striker just would not be the same with out the great 1-14 FA command team and mayor cell transforming it into a more permanent site. COL Ragsdale, our deputy commander (DCO) completes the Thunderbolt team; together we are a combat ready, high performing, deployable, learning organization.

Our location in Baghdad allows us to see many of the truck battery convoys when they come to Camp Victory. It's great seeing them--old home week every time. C, 1/12 will soon be followed by B/5-3. Last out of the shoot will be B/1-12. They will all operate convoys from Camp Arifjian in Kuwait, but, they'll always have a place to call home when in our neighborhood.

Grace continues to tell me about how great the FRGs are doing. To the FRG leaders, points of contact, and all of the members, I can't thank you enough. You are demonstrating selfless service to each other and awesome support to those of us who are deployed. Please continue to take care of each other. Let us know if the video teleconferences are often enough for everyone that wants airtime. The holidays are just around the corner. I'm sure the FRGs will have creative events for you and the kids so stay in touch for more information. They are always a great time!

In the next two months, we will set the stage for the national elections. The opposition will do everything it can to try to stop the march of freedom. But, it will fail. The human spirit, once it has tasted freedom, will not turn back. Please keep the Iraqis in your prayers for continued courage, perseverance, and hope. Also, please keep us in your prayers as we pray for you daily on the roof of the headquarters. With God's help, nothing is impossible. God bless America!

CAMP VICTORY'S MAYOR CELL

Greetings to all of the friends and families whose loved ones are part of our Camp Victory Mayor's Cell. As you all know, we made it into Kuwait and a few days later into Baghdad safely, a short four weeks ago. Since then everyone has been getting settled into their new billeting, acclimatizing to the weather, and getting used to their new jobs. Our Soldiers, NCOs, and Officers are all living in air-conditioned trailers and have one roommate. Every trailer has a bed (no cots), nightstand, and wall locker. Bathrooms and showers are located close by in trailers that offer private stalls, air-conditioning, and running water. The temperature in Baghdad this time of year averages 100°F, but it is gradually cooling off as we reach the rainy season from November to January.

Probably the most interesting part of getting used to things here in Baghdad, though, has to be the jobs we are doing here. Back in Fort Sill we ran command posts, pulled guard duty, and shot rockets. Here in Baghdad we are running one of the larger camps with tenants that include civilian contractors supporting the US Army; coalition partners from countries like Britain, South Korea, Italy, and Poland; and all of our fellow US Service members (Navy, Marines, & Air Force). In order to accomplish this, we have divided our staff into several sections.

Captain Derek Campbell and First Sergeant Garret Spencer comprise our Department of Public Works (DPW) Section. The DPW Section is charged with making sure Camp Victory's infrastructure can support tenant demands and is functioning properly. This includes things like water and power generation; sewage and other waste disposal; and work orders to fix or add to buildings.

Captain James Jackson and Sergeant Loreto Rubio comprise our Department of Logistics (DOL) Section. The DOL Section provides our Mayor's Cell with supplies, but their biggest mission is handling contracting for Camp Victory. Contractors do everything from serve food to repair camp roads, so our DOL Section's oversight involves a lot of high-dollar contracts with both US and foreign companies.

Captain Travis Immesoete joined us a couple of weeks late, but has done a great job as our Terrain Manager. As the Terrain Manager, Captain Immesoete manages the use of Camp Victory's permanent buildings as well as all of the open land on the Camp.

Captain Bradley Hobson and First Sergeant Wiley Watts compose our Operations Section. The Operations Section facilitates coordination among the other staff sections and helps to plan projects that have far reaching effects around the camp. Under the Operations Section are the following sub-sections. Sergeant First Class Zockarey Byrd is the Camp's Force Protection NCO. His job is placing large concrete barriers and monitoring other projects related to keeping our troops safe on the camp. Staff Sergeant Johnell Pasely is the Camp's Lift & Haul Coordinator. He supervises the crews that move large concrete barriers, trailers, and almost anything else that's too big for Soldiers to lift. Finally, Specialist Jason Graber is our Environment Protection & Hazmat Manager. His day is spent inspecting areas like motor pools were materials such as oil are stored and responding to spills or other environmental emergencies.

Captain Henry Davis and Sergeant First Class Scott Minde head our Administrative and Billeting Section. The Admin / Billeting Section handles paperwork in the Mayor's Cell, provides tent and trailer housing for almost everyone on Camp Victory, runs the Mayor's Cell 24 hour help desk, and coordinates Morale Welfare & Recreation (MWR) events for the camp. Specialist Justin Tolenna works at the Billeting Office and pulls shifts at the help desk to give other Soldiers some time off. In the Billeting Office his duties range from checking rooms to reviewing information on computerized databases. Sergeant Batey runs the help desk which takes work orders, gives out information like phone numbers, and generally allows us to respond to tenant's issues in a timely manner. Manning the help desk is Private Jessica Ross, Specialist James Bratton, and Private First Class Angelica Ciriaco. Finally, Sergeant Eric Ross is our MWR coordinator. He meets regularly with the MWR organization and helps to plan and coordinate events such as concerts and competitions to help entertain our tenants in their free time.

First Lieutenant Travis Coffman and Specialist Randy Kyota make up our Automations Section. The Automations Section makes sure everyone's computers are working and handle anything involving electronics or computer software for the Mayor's Cell.

Last but not least, Lieutenant Colonel Tracy Banister and Command Sergeant Major Terry Hall are the Camp Victory Mayor and Camp Victory Non-Commissioned Officer in charge. By leveraging their combined military experience of over 40 years, they lead and mentor all of the Officers, Sergeants, and Soldiers in the Camp Victory Mayor Cell.

CAMP LIBERTY'S GOVERNOR CELL

Hello to everyone from Iraq near what some call the cradle of civilization. For those who think that we are over 7,000 miles from Fort Sill, you would be right. But, if you study history and read the bible, you would find that we are closer to the roots of modern civilization than many of us ever thought we would be.

Not only did Iraq give the world Saddam Hussein, but it is also the birthplace of writing, the plow and the first great code of law. It's also the birthplace of Abraham from the Bible. Agriculture may also have started here. The earliest evidence of animal and plant domestication was found in and around northern Iraq dated at more than 10,000 years ago. To our south is Babylon just a matter of hours from here. The empire of Babylon flourished under its first leader Hammurabi. One of its structures, the tower of Babel, is specifically mentioned in the Bible. The Babylonian Empire flourished under Hammurabi and is widely regarded as the cradle of modern civilization. It was the first case where government provides for its people and enforced the rule of law.

But enough of the history lesson for now, the fact is that the Raiders are spread out from Fort Sill to Iraq to Kuwait is truly amazing. In spite of the space, modern communication brings us together often. I communicate with all three locations, and all three organizations, daily to better understand what's going on in the Battalion as a whole. The Raider Battalion has arrived and everyone knows about it. The CSM and I, along with members of the staff, are here in Baghdad performing a mission that Artillery units are well suited to do…support. It is a mission that we do every day to some extent. Each day we prioritize resources and implement innovative solutions to problems. That's just what we do for a living and what we are doing here.

If your husband, wife, son, or daughter is with us in Iraq today, you should be very proud of their accomplishments. They are making history and changing the world as we know it today. Please understand that we are doing everything in our power to ensure that your soldier has the best equipment, training, and leadership to accomplish the mission. Furthermore, we are sparing no resource to ensure their safety and protection while on mission and on the base. While on mission, controls are in place, and equipment is available, that saves lives and brings us all home safely. All available technology is being sent to the field for our use. Rest assured that no resource is being held in reserve. And while soldiers are on the base, they are eating three hot meals a day, drinking cold sodas, and sleeping in a climate controlled environment. Their security and well being are top priorities. Whenever I can even more positively influence your soldiers' quality of life, I will ensure it happens. Don't be fooled. Life on the base here is good and the quality of our living conditions has changed significantly just since I left here in February.

On the news front, the Battalion HQs is here supporting over 12,000 military and 7,000 civilian personnel in our area. Everyday, we make sure that all these people are safe, secure, and able to accomplish their mission. The training that we received with the 17th Brigade prior to our departure was absolutely fantastic and we had very little surprises after our arrival. The fact that your soldiers are true professionals anyway made the transition here was much, much easier.

I'd like to say congratulations to newly promoted MSG Goins. MSG Goins came to us recently from the Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTC) in Germany. He is a great leader and his promotion ceremony was just outstanding the other night. Congratulations to him and his family…hooah!

If you hear a rumor, give the FRG and/or Rear D a call and we'll sort it out. Don't believe everything you hear. Even if the source is someone you believe to be "expert and reliable." If you didn't hear it from the Chain of Command, then you have cause to question what people are saying. Pass the information to us and we'll get the truth out to everyone.

To all, be safe…trust that we are doing the right thing for our sons and daughters here in Iraq. We are all trained, ready, and know what to do. As always, I'd encourage you to become engaged in the FRG and with the Rear Detachment. We are dedicated to keep you better informed and make you more independent. God Bless and Take Care.

CAMP STRIKER'S MAYOR CELL

The Steel Warriors have hit the ground running in Baghdad! In our first month we have become a part of the community here. In certain areas we have been able to score "quick victories," making a difference here right away. It has been truly rewarding to be able to make improvements in the quality of life on Camp Striker so quickly.

Shortly after arriving we held a ground breaking ceremony for the new Camp Chapel. The current chapel is often packed and is constantly busy with services, Bible studies, and other church related events every day of the week. The new chapel will be larger and at a better location – close to the recreation center and the gym. 1LT Layne Matthews coordinated and organized the ground breaking ceremony which went off beautifully. The construction workings began immediately afterwards, making this a true ground breaking and not just ceremonial. We hope to have the new Chapel ready to occupy before Thanksgiving.

Lieutenant Matthews has also been busy as the Camp Safety Officer. He organized and ran a Safety Council Meeting where tenants on Camp Striker and the surrounding area were able to air their safety concerns and discuss solutions. One area where we have made big gains is with Soldier pedestrian traffic between our front gate and the building across the street from the front gate. There is a stop sign, but vehicles were often running it as well as speeding. We have added speed bumps inside and outside the front gate, as well as improving and making the stop signs much bigger. LTC Shannon, safety officer for one unit on Camp Striker, thanked us and said that he had been trying for a year to get speed bumps installed there! The improvements have made a noticeable difference, especially at night.

SFC Charles Parrott and 1LT Bill Talcott Force have been making a difference in the Force Protection arena. They routinely check throughout camp making on the spot corrections and identifying areas that need to be improved. In particular the back gate and the dining facility are more secure due to their efforts. This is a critical area for quality of life on Camp Striker, and the right people are certainly on the job.

One of the first things that we noticed when we arrived was the long lines at finance. There are no ATM machines in the area where we are living, known as Victory Base Complex. Soldiers can cash checks and receive casual pay at finance, though. But the finance hours were too short, and were different on odd and even weeks which can be confusing. After several weeks of coordinating we were able to extend the finance hours and add another entire day every week. Similarly, the Post Office on camp is now open 7 days per week rather than 5.

We still have a lot of work ahead making Camp Striker a better place to live, but the Steel Warrior team is off to a good start and picking up steam!

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CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

"God's Word will keep me from sin; Sin will keep me from God's Word, I choose."
D. L. MOODY

Greetings from Iraq. Please find assurance in knowing that God answers prayer and that the Thunderbolts are a praying people. Victory Base Complex offers several opportunities for worship, Bible Studies, and prayer. The Thunderbolts are praying over Baghdad. We are following the example of Daniel, the Old Testament prophet. Daniel prayed over Babylon (currently Iraq) in defiance of the king's laws, "but when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to his God." (Daniel 6:10). Daniel was thrown into the lion's den because of his disobedience to the king, but God closed the mouths of the lions (see Daniel 6:16-22). Some Thunderbolts meet Monday-Friday, 0830-0845 on the roof of our Headquarters, Building 67 to pray. The rest pray as they are available to pray.

I have discovered the following truths about prayer. 1) Stare at God, only glance at yourself and your request. 2) Let prayer be your first choice, not your last. 3) Pray more from conviction, rather than from crisis. 4) Pray in specifics, not generalities. (note: be honest with God let Him know what you really want to happen; why not? He already knows your heart). 5) Let your prayer be filled with praise, "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised." Psalm 48:1a. 6) Listen for God's answers. A contemporary Christian song from the early 80's said, "I need to be still and let God love me." We need to be still and listen to God's gentle whisper. (Read I Kings 19:11-12). We can find God's answers to our prayers in Worship, Bible Study, in the Wisdom of Other Believers. Hear the words of the great preacher D. L. Moody, "God's Word will keep me from sin; Sin will keep me from God's Word, I choose." Choose to grow spiritually through a vibrant prayer life and include listening for God's answer to your prayers.

May God Bless You by Making You a Blessing. May You Not Just Make a Difference In Other's Lives, But May You BE the Positive Difference in Other's Lives.

HUMAN RESOURCE DIRECTORATE

FEATURED DIRECTORATE

The Human Resource Directorate (HRD) consists of CPT Anderson, SFC Matheney, SGT Day and PFC George. HRD is responsible for all personnel actions, to include pay issues, awards and evaluations. We serve as the MWR Coordinators for the Victory Base Complex and the Public Affairs Office for the Garrison Command. This past month our unit participated in the first flag football tournament of the season. Although we did not win, we are steadily improving, preparing for the next tournament. The annual Army 10-Miler event was a huge success, turning out 441 competitors, including several of our own coming out to show their support. Each camp have nightly MWR events to get the spirit and morale of your Soldiers high as was evident in Camp Victory's first Karaoke Night where we were serenaded by COL Reid and CSM Williams. The upcoming months will prove promising with a visit from the Congressional Medal of Honor Tour and the Purrfect Angelz Dance Tour. Rest assured the we will provide enough entertainment and recreations to keep your Soldiers occupied throughout the coming month. We all send a special shout out to our supportive husband, wives and families. We love and miss you. See you soon.

HRD